



**BAPTISM AND COMMUNION:
UNDERSTANDING AND CELEBRATING
THESE ORDINANCES**

Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Understanding and Celebrating these Ordinances

Key Terms

- **Ordinance:** Practices ordained by Jesus that He has instructed His followers to carry out on a regular basis.
- **Baptism:** A visible representation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in which a believer goes under the water and back up again.
- **Immersion:** To dip or submerge completely in water.
- **Baptismal Regeneration:** The false teaching that baptism brings about salvation.
- **The Lord's Supper:** One of the two ordinances of the church that commemorates the death of Christ on the cross.

THE TWO ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

An ordinance is a practice that was ordained or established by Jesus during His life and ministry, and He instructed His followers to continue practice after His life and ministry. We believe there are two practices that can be rightly classified as ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper. These practices are an important part of the spiritual life of the believer and in the life and mission of the local church.

Questions being answered tonight:

- **What is baptism?**
- **What does it mean to be baptized by immersion?**
- **Who should be baptized?**
- **What is the purpose of baptism?**
- **What is the Lord's Supper?**
- **Who should observe the Lord's Supper?**

Baptism

What is Baptism?

When we talk about the ordinance of baptism, we are talking about water baptism. This is something that is physical and visible. The majority of New Testament passages that talk about baptism are referring to water baptism.

Mark 1:9-11 "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. 10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: 11

And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

How Should We Baptize?

We believe and teach that the only acceptable mode of baptism is baptism by immersion. This means that a person is put completely under the water and brought back up again.

Three Arguments for Baptism by Immersion

1. The Greek word baptizo means to “plunge, dip, or immerse” something in water.
2. The idea of immersion is appropriate and logical in the context of passages in the New Testament that record water baptisms.

Matthew 3:16 *“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:”*

John 3:23 *“And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.”*

3. Baptism is a picture of Christ’s death and resurrection and that would seem to necessitate a baptism by immersion.

Romans 6:4 *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*

Who Needs to be Baptized?

The New Testament teaches that all people who put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation should demonstrate their faith through an act of obedience, which is baptism. Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus represents the one and only qualification for baptism according to the New Testament.

When Should a Believer be Baptized?

Baptism should happen as soon after salvation as is practically possible. In the New Testament, we see baptism happening quickly after belief in Jesus.

Acts 2:41 *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”*

Acts 8:36-38 “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ” 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”

Baptism should be taken seriously, and no one should be forced into being baptized. We should also be careful not to place extra biblical requirements on people that they have to meet in order to be baptized. Salvation is the requirement and when someone meets that requirement, provision should be made for them to be baptized.

Why Should A Believer be Baptized?

Five Reasons a Believer Should be Baptized

1. To lift up Jesus and proclaim the Gospel.
 - Since baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, baptism is a physical testimony of the power of the Gospel.
2. To be obedient to the command of Jesus.
 - Jesus very clearly told His disciples that everyone who believes in Jesus for salvation should demonstrate their faith and commitment to Christ by being baptized.

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

3. To follow the example of Jesus.
 - Jesus initiated His public ministry by getting baptized. We should seek to imitate Christ in our life.

Matthew 3:13 “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

4. To Identify with Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection.

Romans 6:3-4 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

5. To publicly declare our desire to follow Jesus.
 - When we are baptized, we are declaring our commitment to Christ and our desire to follow Him the rest of our lives!
6. To qualify for membership in the local church.

Acts 2:41 *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”*

Baptismal Regeneration

Some believe and teach that baptism has saving power. We reject this as a false teaching that adds works to grace. Baptism does not save a person and is not necessary for salvation.

I Corinthians 1:17 *“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.”*

Mark 16: 15-16 *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”*

Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Second Blessing

Not only does baptism not save a person, it also does not do any additional work related to our salvation or our spiritual life. Some teach of a “second blessing” or make reference to what is referred to in Scripture as the Baptism in or of the Holy Spirit to argue that something more happens to you after you are baptized.

“What shall we say about the phrase, “baptism in the Holy Spirit”? It is a phrase that the New Testament authors use to speak of coming into the new covenant power of the Holy Spirit. It happened at Pentecost for the disciples, but it happened at conversion for us. It is not a phrase the New Testament authors would use to speak of any postconversion experience of empowering by the Holy Spirit.” Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem

Where Should a Believer be Baptized?

Baptism is best practiced in the local church and during the public assembly of a local church. Jesus gave His followers the Great Commission, and He established the local church as the primary means by which this mission is carried out. This is why it makes sense for the local church to be the place where baptism is practiced, and the public gatherings of a local church represent a perfect opportunity to practice baptism.

While there is not a clear Scriptural mandate to be baptized in a public assembly of a local church, there are many obvious, practical benefits.

1. Baptism being practiced in the church provides the best framework for organization, accountability, and discipleship.

2. The other saved and baptized believers who are present have the opportunity to celebrate with the one being baptized.
3. Being baptized publicly provides a moment of accountability for the believer being baptized.

Who Should Baptize?

Since the local church and the public gatherings of the local church represent the ideal place and time for baptism to be practiced, it is reasonable that in many Christian traditions, the people doing the baptizing have been the leadership of the church. In the same way that there is no clear Scriptural mandate for baptism to be practiced in the public assembly of the local church, there is no specific command for baptism to only be performed by pastors. Ultimately, pastors doing the baptizing represents a practical standard for the local church, as we strive to do things decently and in order.

The Lord's Supper

What is the Lord's Supper?

Also referred to as the Lord's Table and Communion, this is the second of the two ordinances of the church. These phrases are all referencing a moment in the life of Jesus that we call The Last Supper. Three of the four Gospel records give an accounting of the Last Supper, and then Paul the Apostle gives an extended treatment of it in one of his letters to the Corinthian Christians.

Matthew 26:26-30 *“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. 30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”*

I Corinthians 11:23-34 *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak*

and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. 33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. 34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.”

Who Should Participate in the Lord’s Supper?

People who have believed in Jesus for salvation should participate in the Lord’s Supper. The context of the relevant New Testament passages make it clear that this practice is for believers. While not clearly taught in Scripture, some make baptism and/or church membership an additional requirement for participation in this practice. While these requirements can be practical in a local church context, they are not required according to Scripture. Ultimately, these are secondary issues and sincere believers can disagree.

Why Should We Observe the Lord’s Supper?

Five Reasons We Should Observe the Lord’s Supper

1. To lift up Jesus and proclaim the Gospel.
 - Just like baptism, the Lord’s Supper is a visible testament to the power of the Gospel!
2. To be obedient to the command of Jesus

***1 Corinthians 11:24** “...this do in remembrance of me.”*

3. To remember the sacrifice of Christ on the cross

***Mark 14:24** “And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.”*

***Isaiah 53:5** “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”*

4. To picture the unity of the body of Christ
 - This practice presents an opportunity for brothers and sisters in Christ to come together in unity around our shared faith. The beauty and diversity of the body is on full display, as we come together to remember our Savior and His love for us.

***1 Corinthians 10:16-17** “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”*

5. To examine ourselves and confess sin

1 Corinthians 11:27-30 “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”

- We should approach the Lord's Supper seriously, and use it as an opportunity for self examination and confession. The context of 1 Corinthians 11 is the unity of the body of Christ. Paul was issuing a warning to those who were disrupting the unity of the body of Christ and mistreating their brothers and sisters. This kind of behavior is what makes someone “unworthy” of participation. Ultimately, whether or not a believer should participate is a matter between them and God.

6. To look ahead to the Second Coming of Jesus

1 Corinthians 11:26 “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”

Titus 2:13-14 “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

When Should We Observe the Lord's Supper?

How often The Lord's Supper should be practiced is a decision best made by each local church. While the Scriptures do not specify how often, it should be observed as much as is practically possible for the edification of God's people!

Where Should We Have the Lord's Supper?

Like baptism, the ideal place and time for The Lord's Supper is the local church during a public assembly of the church. As God's mechanism for carrying out the Great Commission, the local church represents the ideal place for the regular practice of both ordinances.

Who Should Oversee the Lord's Supper?

Like baptism, it is ideal that the Lord's Supper be overseen by the leadership of the church. This presents the most effective and practical setting for the practice to be observed so that it is done decently and in order.

Group Discussion Questions

As a group, read the following questions and discuss. Be sure to give everyone an opportunity to answer.

- Read Acts 8:26-40 together as a group and answer the following questions.
 1. What does the passage say the Ethiopian was reading?
 2. Who did Phillip reveal to be the person the Scriptures were talking about?
 3. What is significant about the sequence of events as it relates to baptism?

- Have 2 or 3 people in the group share their baptism story.

- What verse mentioned tonight was the most helpful for you? Was there anything that stood out to you to be encouraging, eye-opening, or helpful?

- How can the group pray for you?